

# WISCONSIN TRAFFIC SAFETY REPORTER

OCTOBER 1999

## FOCUS ON

### Occupant Protection

By Don Hagen

As an EMT, I have responded to motor vehicle crash scenes and have provided medical care to people who have hit the windshield or bounced around the inside of a vehicle.

Some of these people would have had less severe injuries if they had been wearing safety belts. How can we EMTs tell people that the pain they are suffering might have been less severe had they been wearing a safety belt? How can we explain to a parent that their child was thrown from the back seat through the windshield and, on their way out, the child hit and killed one of the front seat passengers? How can we explain to parents that their child was killed in a parking lot crash because they put the child in front of an air bag?

Statistics from many crash studies tell us that we should wear our safety belts and be sure children are properly restrained in appropriate safety seats, but often people don't consider the facts. We tend to think, "Car crashes happen to other people."

You often hear, "I was just going a short distance, so I didn't need to worry." People don't realize that a high percentage of crashes occur within a few blocks of home and at low speeds. You can't predict when someone is going to blow through a stop sign or when a drunk driver will cross the center line. Three of five drivers will be involved in at least one crash sometime in their life. You never know when it will happen to you.

The EMTs and law enforcement officers who responded to the van crash near Janesville will remember that scene for a long time. None of the 14 young people in the van were wearing their seat belts, and all seven of those who died were among the 12 who were thrown from the van. Along with emergency room nurses and physicians, we remember the harm done and wish we could do more to get people to buckle up and be sure their children are properly restrained. My best memories as an EMT are when I've offered verbal comfort rather than medical aid to people who survived in good shape because they were buckled up or in a child safety seat.

Don Hagen, see Resources on page 12

## Health outcomes and costs of not wearing safety belts

by Wayne Bigelow and Trudy Karlson

Vehicle crashes are one of the largest sources of preventable injury and death in Wisconsin. National Center for Health Statistics data for 1993-1995 show, for example, that for people in Wisconsin ages one to 44, crashes are the single largest source of mortality and serious injury, accounting for 20% of all deaths.

While there are many ways to reduce the burden of crashes on our population's health, the simplest is for people to buckle up. In this article we evaluate the importance of wearing seat belts in preventing death and injury.

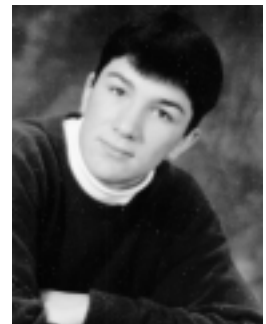
Information comes from the Wisconsin Crash Outcome Data Evaluation System (CODES) which links WisDOT crash data with hospital discharge data available from the Office of Health Care Information within the Wisconsin Dept. of Health and Human Services. CODES is funded through grants from NHTSA and the WisDOT Bureau of Transportation Safety. Our analysis utilizes data from 1994-96 for passenger vehicle crashes only.

One significant methodological issue in analyzing the protective value of seat belt use is over-reporting. The most recent WisDOT seat belt survey available (1996) shows seat belt use at 61%. By comparison, WisDOT crash data reveals self-reported seat belt use at 88%. In order to compensate for over-reporting, we adjusted the reported data to represent the state average shown in the survey (61%). Effectively, we proportionately assigned cases from those reporting seat belt use to the group not wearing seat belts. Similarly, we proportionately assigned outcomes (death, hospitalization and serious brain injury) to the no seat belt use group. Persons missing data on seat belt use were excluded from the analysis.

Table 1 (see page 2) provides information on persons involved in crashes: their seat belt use (both the unadjusted and adjusted estimates) and crash-related health outcomes.

Continued on page 2

## Safety Belt Use



BEFORE the crash



AFTER the crash

In 1994 Louie Clark IV was a typical 18-year old with a great enthusiasm for basketball and baseball. He hopes no one else will have to go through what he did when the car he was in crashed into a stopped school bus. He was not buckled up. He is anxious to share his story about the car crash that changed his views about the importance of buckling up.

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## Health outcomes and costs of not wearing safety belts *from page 1*

Table 2 provides information on crash-related outcomes (adjusted only) for all crashes and for head-on collisions only. The results are striking. The likelihood of death is 4.2 times greater for persons not wearing belts for all crashes combined. Persons not wearing seat belts are 2.4 times more likely to be hospitalized, and 3.9 times more likely to suffer serious brain injury than are crash occupants wearing seat belts.

The relative risks are even higher (see right column) in head-on collisions, in which seat belts should be most effective in preventing death and serious head injury.

If the rate of seat belt use among crash occupants had

been 80%, our estimates show that as many as 363 lives would have been saved, with 1,485 fewer hospitalizations in Wisconsin during 1994-1996.

Not wearing a seat belt also has a major impact on hospital charges. In a separate analysis using 1996 CODES data, we reviewed charges associated with seat belt use for hospitalized crash occupants. The average charge for those reported to be wearing seat belts was \$13,470, and it was \$20,420 for those who were not—49% higher.

Getting more people to buckle up will require a variety of approaches—legislative, regulatory and educational—and it would yield major dividends for our population's health.

## Should pregnant women wear safety belts?



Yes! Safety belts work for pregnant women. Like all occupants, pregnant women are more likely to be seriously injured if they are not properly restrained. When a safety belt is worn properly, it is more likely that the fetus will not be hurt in a crash. For pregnant women, as for anyone, the key to making safety belts effective is to wear them properly. Pregnant women should wear lap-shoulder belts. The lap portion should be worn as low as possible, below the rounding, throughout the pregnancy.

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**Table 1**

**Number of occupants in vehicle crashes in Wisconsin (1994-1996) by seat belt use, with selected health-related outcomes**

<i>NOT adjusted for over-reporting</i>				<i>Adjusted for over-reporting</i>		
All crashes	Not belted	Belted	Total	Not Belted	Belted	Total
Killed	857	558	1,415	1,032	383	1,415
Hospitalized	3,580	4,869	8,449	5,107	3,342	8,449
Brain Injury	823	594	1,417	1,009	408	1,417
<b>Total</b>	<b>91,148</b>	<b>727,701</b>	<b>818,849</b>	<b>319,361</b>	<b>499,488</b>	<b>818,849</b>

**Table 2**

**Relative risk of being killed, hospitalized or having serious brain injury for occupants not wearing seat belts vs those wearing seat belts in Wisconsin (1994-1996)**

*Numbers are adjusted for belt use over-reporting*

	Relative Risk Ratio	
	All crashes	Head-on collisions only
Killed	4.2	7.5
Hospitalized	2.4	3.4
Serious brain injury	3.9	5.6

## Child passengers at risk A national study of car seat misuse

Despite numerous campaigns to promote the use of safety belts and car seats, and despite child occupant protection laws in every state, motor vehicle crashes continue to kill and seriously injure children at an alarming rate. Each year in the U.S. approximately 1,800 children ages 14 and under are killed as occupants in motor vehicles and more than 280,000 are injured.

Car seats, when correctly installed and used, are extremely effective in saving children's lives, reducing the risk of death by as much as 70% for infants and 50% for toddlers. However they are complicated to install and use, and it is no surprise that mistakes are extremely common. Factors contributing to the difficulty of using seats correctly include: a variety of age and size requirements, incompatibility between car seat and vehicle design, improper seating position, and gaps in child occupant protection laws.

In 1996 the National SAFE KIDS Campaign partnered with General Motors to develop the SAFE KIDS BUCKLE UP program. This child passenger safety initiative provides hands-on instruction to parents through hundreds of car seat check up events hosted by state and local SAFE KIDS coalitions and GM dealerships (see page 7 for up-coming check ups in Wisconsin). It is part of an effort led by NHTSA to train specialists and educate families about child passenger safety. Car seat check ups utilize a formal protocol in which trained child passenger safety specialists inspect the car seats of participating families to ensure proper installation and use. Often parents are shocked to find they were restraining their children incorrectly.

This study captured information on the restraints of more than 17,500 children who were brought to check ups from July 1997 through November 1998. The survey assessed up to 40 elements of correct use of restraints, including age-appropriateness, installation in the vehicle, child's fit in the seat, and whether the seat had been recalled (and not repaired), or involved in a crash.

From the study summary, published on the National SAFE KIDS Campaign website at [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org).

### The most common misuses for child car seats



**17% misuse**

Locking clip should be used according to directions

#### Seat belts

**19% misuse**  
Harness retainer clip should be at armpit level



**23% misuse**

Harness straps should be at or above shoulder level

**31% misuse**

Harness strap should be snug

**65% misuse**

Safety belt should hold seat in tightly

**14% misuse**

Belt should be in locked mode

#### Forward-facing seats

**11% misuse**

Child until at least 1 year and at least 20 pounds should be rear-facing

**19% misuse**  
Harness retainer clip should be at armpit level



**16% misuse**

Harness straps should be at or below shoulder level

**35% misuse**

Harness straps should be snug

**12% misuse**

Safety belt should be in locked mode

**30% misuse**  
Rear-facing car seat should recline at 45 degree angle

**61% misuse**

Safety belt should hold seat in tightly

#### Rear-facing seats

### OCCUPANT PROTECTION

## Child Passenger Safety

#### OVERALL FINDINGS

85% of car seats observed at SAFE KIDS BUCKLE UP events were misused, with an average of two errors per seat.

#### Car seat misuse in Wisconsin

During 1998, SAFE KIDS coalitions in Wisconsin inspected car seats for correct installation, child fit, and for safety recalls.

Total seats	700
Misused	580
% Misused	83%

#### Most common misuses for rear and forward- facing seats:

Safety belt not holding seat tightly	61%
Harness straps not snug	43%
Harness retainer clip not at armpit level	20%
Recalled seats which were not repaired	12%

Source: Wisconsin SAFE KIDS Coalition  
(888) 344-7580



## What are the different types of add-on child restraints?



Add-on child restraints, which are purchased by the vehicle's owner, are available in four basic types. Selection of a particular restraint should take into consideration not only the child's weight, height, and age but also whether or not the restraint will be compatible with the motor vehicle in which it will be used.



An *infant car bed* (A), a special bed made for use in a motor vehicle, is an infant restraint system designed to restrain or position an infant on a continuous flat surface. Make sure that the infant's head rests toward the center of the vehicle.



A *rear-facing infant seat* (B-C) is a child restraint system that positions an infant to face in the direction opposite to the normal direction of travel of the motor vehicle. Rear-facing seats are designed for infants of up to about twenty pounds, 19 to 26 inches in height, and up to at least one year of age. It is necessary that this restraint face the rear, so the infant's head, neck, and body can have the support they would need in a crash. Some infant seats come in two parts. The base stays secured in the vehicle, and the seat snaps in and out.



A *Forward-facing child seat* (D-F) is a child restraint system that positions a child upright to face in the normal direction of travel of the motor vehicle. These forward-facing seats are designed to help protect children who are from 20 to 40 pounds and about 26 to 40 inches in height, or up to around four years of age.



A *convertible child seat* is a restraint system designed to be used either as a rear-facing infant seat or a forward-facing child seat. Some convertible seats are designed to be used rear-facing for infants who weigh more than 20 pounds.



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## Menomonie PD and community foster passenger safety

by Randy Richter

The Menomonie Police Department believes that cooperation is the key to promoting passenger safety throughout the community.

Last August in Eau Claire, I attended the four-day Standardized Child Passenger Safety Technician Training (see page 11). Afterwards I provided a review of the training and information about current child restraint use recommendations to nurses at local hospitals and clinics who provide infant passenger restraints for new parents, and to Dunn County public health nurses who provide rentals of convertible and booster restraints for older children.

In February a child safety seat check up was conducted in Menomonie with the assistance of trained technicians from Eau Claire, nurses from the hospital and public health department, and sheriff's department personnel. Of 34 seats checked, only two being used correctly. Afterward the hospital, public health and sheriff's departments agreed to send staff to the child safety technician training.

In April the police department worked with the local school district and a broad coalition of community partners to conduct a Mock Crash prior to the junior prom to help prevent a drinking and driving tragedy. After students observed the crash scene they listened to speakers: a survivor of a drunk driving crash, a funeral director, a nurse who works with the medical examiner, and a student who read a poem, *Death of an Innocent*.

In May the police department will participate in a SAFE KIDS Gear Up Day, which will include gear up games, a body walk for children, a safety seat check, and bicycle safety rodeo.

Contact Officer Randy Richter, (715) 232-2198, [rrichter@win.bright.net](mailto:rrichter@win.bright.net)

## Child passenger restraints— Use them correctly to save lives

Motor vehicle crashes are the most common cause of death for children up to age 14. Over half of these deaths could be prevented if the children were properly secured in size-appropriate restraints. NHTSA's 1996 *Patterns of Misuse Study* found 80% misuse, while safety seat checkpoints often find over 90% misuse (see page 3).

- Often incompatibility between child restraints and vehicles make correct installation difficult or impossible. A properly installed child restraint cannot be moved more than about an inch from side to side or forward.
- Another common error is improper threading and tightening of the restraint harness. Generally harnesses for rear-facing restraints should be at or below shoulder level. Harnesses for forward-facing restraints should be at or above shoulder level and in reinforced slots (usually the top slots). Harnesses should be snug enough on the child so that no more than one finger fits between the child and the harness. The harness retainer clip should be at armpit level.
- Appropriate selection of a child restraint is VERY important. Children should ride rear-facing in infant or convertible restraints until they are at least one year old AND weigh at least 20 pounds. Children over age one who weigh 20-40 pounds should ride in forward-facing convertible or toddler restraints WITH harness. Until they weigh 60-80 pounds, are 4 feet 6 inches tall, and are 8-12 years old, children should ride in belt-positioning boosters combined with vehicle lap AND shoulder belts. Once they fit correctly in adult belts (see above) children should always ride in the back seat.
- To ensure correct selection and use of child restraints, parents should carefully read their restraint instruction manual and vehicle owner's manual. If they have questions, they should call Wisconsin SAFE KIDS, (715) 344-7101, WINS, (800) 261-9467, NHTSA's *Auto Safety Hotline*, (800) 424-9393, or Don Hagen, WisDOT, (608) 267-7520.

From Wisconsin SAFE KIDS Child Passenger Safety Facts

# New federal standard for safety seat anchors

by Beth Kindschi

In the future, vehicles will be equipped with easy-to-use child restraint anchorage systems that are standardized and independent of the vehicle seat belts. This will reduce installation difficulties that have plagued parents due to more than 300 vehicle models with different kinds of safety belts and more than 100 models of safety seats.

By September 1, 2002, all car seats (except belt positioning boosters, car beds, and the top shell of infant seats with detachable bases) will have permanent hardware that will allow the seat to be securely anchored to the anchorages in vehicles. The attachments must have a visible or audible indicator that the car seat is firmly attached to the anchors. Webbing-based attachments must be adjustable.

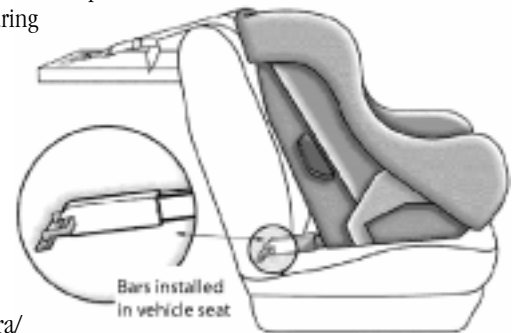
This "plug in" system of safety seat installation is expected to almost eliminate installation errors, but securing the child in the safety seat will still be a problem. And families with more than three children in safety seats will still have a problem. Child passenger safety technicians (see page 11) who help parents make the right choices and perform correct installations will not be out of work soon!

For more about Uniform Child Restraint Anchorages, check the NHTSA website at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/childps/ucra/index.html](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/childps/ucra/index.html).

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## Uniform child restraint anchorage

Rigid 2-point lower attachment with top tether



## Booster seat alert

When children graduate from 40-pound-maximum convertible child seats, they need to be placed in booster seats. According to NHTSA, of the 891 fatalities of children up to 4 years old from 1990 to 1994, 728 were either unbelted or using vehicle safety belts rather than child safety seats or boosters.

Compared with adults, a higher percentage of children's body weight is in their heads, and their bodies are more flexible and have less body fat to keep a safety belt in place. In a crash they can easily slip out of a standard seat belt or out of the proper position to be restrained without injury.

A Blue Ribbon Panel was formed at the request of the heads of US DOT and NHTSA to address the serious issue of unrestrained or improperly restrained children ages 4 through 15. The panel's recommendations include:

- When children outgrow child safety seats, around age 4, they should ride in booster seats until they weigh at least 60—and preferably 80—pounds. Older children can use safety belts. Those under age 13 should be in the rear seat, particularly in air bag-equipped vehicles.
- All states should require children younger than 4 to be in a child safety seat, and older children to age 16 to be in either a booster seat or a properly adjusted safety belt.
- Law enforcement agencies should conduct high visibility enforcement which includes emphasis on enforcing child passenger safety laws.
- Educational programs should be directed toward getting 4 to 8 year olds in booster seats and older children and adolescents in safety belts.

## Booster seats

A booster seat (A-B) is a child restraint designed for use by children who are about 40 to 60 (or more) pounds, about 35 to 48 inches in height, and about four to eight years of age. It is designed to improve the fit of the vehicle's safety belt system. Some booster seats have a shoulder-belt positioner, and some high-back booster seats have a five-point harness. A booster seat also can help a child to see out the window.

For most of the basic types of child restraints, there are many different models available. The restraint manufacturer's instructions that come with the restraint state the weight and height limitations for a particular child restraint.

In addition, there are many kinds of restraints available for children with special needs.



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## Tethering child restraints

Are you ready for new car seat safety standards? An improved method of anchoring car seats in vehicles with a top tether strap has been mandated in the U.S. for forward-facing car seats beginning in September. A new 80-page manual, *Tethering Child Restraints*, is available for \$21.95 plus shipping from Safe Ride News Publications, (206) 364-5696, [info@twbc.com](mailto:info@twbc.com). The manual provides detailed installation and use information.

The tether, attached to the vehicle at a tether anchor, keeps the car seat from tipping forward on impact by anchoring the car seat to the vehicle. The anchor hardware must be installed in current and older vehicles but will be standard equipment in most new cars this fall.

For further information contact Don Hagen, WisDOT, (608) 267-7520, [don.hagen@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:don.hagen@dot.state.wi.us).



The Wisconsin Highway Safety Partnership (WHSP) is a coalition of public and private organizations, including federal, state and local government, which are concerned with transportation safety. The purpose of WHSP is to foster better communication and cooperation among all kinds of traffic safety organizations in the state.

Starting with this issue, the *Traffic Safety Reporter* will include a section with news from WHSP member organizations and news on hot traffic safety topics. The focus for this initial WHSP section is news from the Wisconsin legislature.



## Traffic safety news from the Legislature

The 1999-2000 session of the Wisconsin legislature is giving high profile to a variety of highway safety issues. An early indication was the creation of a new 8-member Highway Safety Committee in the Assembly, chaired by Representative Jeff Stone (R-Greenfield).

Several bills which address major traffic safety issues are working their way through the legislature (see below). To learn more about these and other bills of interest, contact your legislator via the Legislative Hotline, (800) 362-9472, or visit the legislature's newly redesigned, user-friendly website at [www.legis.state.wi.us](http://www.legis.state.wi.us).

## Legislature works on GDL Bill

by Representative Luther Olsen

Although teenagers account for only 6% of all licensed drivers in Wisconsin, in 1997 they got into 15% of all auto crashes (see table below). We need to let teens ease into the responsibility of driving; many of them have the skills they need but they do not have the necessary experience to make them safe drivers. Graduated driver licensing (GDL) will give teenagers the needed time and practice to become good drivers, and in the end to become old drivers.

In January, 1 introduced Assembly Bill 52 which has three main parts. First, when a teenager has their instructional permit, they must drive for 30 hours with a parent or other adult. Second, once a teenager gets their probationary license, when they are about 16, there is a 9 month skill development period. During this period, a teenager can drive alone, or with parents and other adults, or with members of their immediate family. The important change is that during this period the novice driver can not drive with more than one friend unless an adult is present. Also, during this period the new driver can not drive between midnight and 5 AM unless accompanied by a parent or other adult. Exceptions would be made for students on their way to or from school, a school activity, work, or in an emergency. Third, teenagers would lose their license if they accumulate 12 points within one year, and individual point values would be doubled on second and subsequent moving violations.

The Assembly Committee on Transportation passed an amended version of the bill. One amendment removed the provision that would have required standard seat belt enforcement; committee members had expressed concern that this would give law enforcement too much opportunity to pull people over. In May the Assembly passed AB 52 on a vote of 82 to 17, and it was sent on to the Senate.

Contact Rep. Olsen's office, (608) 266-8077

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### Crash involvement by age groups (1998)

Age Group	Licensed Drivers	Drivers in Crashes	Number in Crashes (per 1,000)
16-19	231,975	31,563	136
20-24	313,702	25,654	82
25-44	1,543,273	81,082	53
45-64	1,082,903	40,046	37
65+	538,104	16,267	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,709,957</b>	<b>194,612</b>	<b>52</b>

Source: WisDOT

## Dave Greening receives NHTSA Highway Safety Award

NHTSA announced the recipients of its highway safety awards at *Lifesavers 17*, the premier highway safety conference in the United States, which was held this March in Seattle. One of the recipients is Dave Greening of Ripon. In 1997, Dave lost his 15 year old son Kris in a car crash. The 17 year old driver had been driving just over a year and had gotten his second speeding citation 5 days earlier. Instead of the small pickup truck he normally had access to, his father had given him the keys to his high performance sports car, and before the crash he elected to go down a road known for its roller coaster hills. Since then, Dave has been a tireless and effective champion for GDL.

## Comprehensive drunk driving legislation introduced

In 1997, over 40% of all fatal car crashes involved a drunk driver. Wisconsin's drunk driving laws would get tougher under Assembly Bill 221 introduced by Representatives Jeff Stone and Steve Foti. Many drunk driving bills that did not become law last session have been rolled into this comprehensive package. AB 221 will enact stiffer standards for repeat drunk drivers. "Public frustration is growing as headlines continually report repeat drunk drivers causing



Photo: Brian Skoppek

fatal accidents.", said Foti. Stone notes that "AB 221 includes several tough penalties to make it even higher stakes for the repeat drunk driver." The bill includes absolute sobriety for drivers with three or more previous OWI convictions, and increased penalties for drunk drivers with high blood alcohol content. Foti notes that "this proposal allows judges to order the installation of an ignition interlock device or confiscate the offender's vehicle."

With this bill, people under 21 who are caught the second and subsequent times buying or in possession of alcohol are guaranteed to lose their driver's license for at least six months. Currently when a person is arrested for drunk driving, they are ordered to have an AODA (alcohol and other drug abuse) assessment, the results of which determine the person's driver safety plan, an education/rehabilitation plan which fits their needs. This bill denies Huber work-release privileges for OWI offenders who haven't reported for, or complied with, this plan. The bill also creates a "Safe Ride" grant program. Interested communities can apply for matching grants to set up programs to offer intoxicated individuals transportation home.

*On May 19 the bill, with numerous amendments, passed the Assembly and has moved on to the Senate.*

Contact Rep. Stone's office, (608) 266-8590

## Teens in crash near Slinger

On the morning of March 1 seven teenagers from Slinger (near Milwaukee) piled into a 1998 Dodge Neon and headed to school. According to the Washington County Sheriff's report, the driver later said that as they approached a railroad crossing she saw warning lights. Other cars were already waiting at the crossing. The driver of the Neon moved around other vehicles and attempted to cross the tracks but was struck by a two engine, 98 car train. All seven teens were injured, two sisters critically.



## Monroe Area SAFE KIDS

by Beth Kindschi

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Children appeal to almost everyone and it is not difficult to encourage agencies to work together for child health and safety. Monroe Area SAFE KIDS Partnership was created in 1990, with interest in children's injury prevention growing out of a car seat loan program at St. Clare Hospital (now the Monroe Clinic and Hospital).

The original partners were the police department (lead agency), the school district and the KIWANIS Club, which pledged funds and people-power. Over the last nine years, the Green County Health, Social Services, Highway and Sheriff's Departments and the Green County UW Extension office have joined, as have the other school districts in the county and all the fire departments. Preschools and day care centers have been involved from time to time.

Members take part in professional capacities and as volunteers. Some of the programs from the last year: a car seat round-up with old car seats turned in for \$5 cash or a \$10 coupon at Wal-Mart, bike helmet promotions at schools and businesses with bike helmets sold for \$7 each or less, two child safety seat check ups, and one four-day

certified child passenger safety technician training class.

Two car seat loan programs are ongoing: one for parents of newborns, and the other for babies who weigh more than 20 pounds before their first birthday (all babies regardless of size need to ride rear-facing for AT LEAST one year).

A young woman who recently moved to our community from another state asked, "Does every town in Wisconsin care so much about the safety of its children?"

*Click-it the Cricket (right) teaches elementary school kids to use seat belts at the Green County Fair.*

*Buckle Bear class (below)*



## Baby, It's Cold Outside!

### Cold weather safety for child passengers

Protecting a baby from the cold can be a challenge. Wisconsin SAFE KIDS suggests:

Infants should ride in rear-facing car seats until one year old AND 20 pounds. Infants do not have strong neck muscles; the rear-facing position cradles an infant's head and neck.

Avoid using heavy snow suits for babies less than six months old. Before that age, a baby's shoulder and neck muscles are not fully developed, and heavy layers of clothing make it difficult to correctly position the safety seat harness straps.

Snow suits and heavy jackets for babies older than six months may be used; however, it is important that the harness straps of your child's safety seat fit snugly. Once your child has graduated to a forward-facing safety seat, he or she can be dressed similarly to you.

In very cold weather, AFTER the safety seat has been properly secured, and AFTER the child has been properly secured in the safety seat, cover the baby AND car seat with a warm blanket.

Store the safety seat at room temperature so it doesn't rob your child of body heat.

Always keep warm clothing and blankets in the vehicle for ALL passengers in case of an emergency.

Call the Wisconsin SAFE KIDS Buckle Up Hotline, (888) 344-7580, or WINS (Wisconsin Information Network for Safety), (800) 261-WINS (9467).



## Wisconsin SAFE KIDS Coalitions target child passenger safety

by Nan Peterson and Jim Savage

Riding unrestrained or improperly restrained is the greatest risk factor for death and injury among children as car passengers, and SAFE KIDS coalitions in Wisconsin have taken a leadership role in promoting child passenger safety. In addition to its parent and professional educational activities, SAFE KIDS has partnered with a wide variety of community organizations and auto dealerships to host car safety seat inspections (see sidebar).

There are SAFE KIDS coalitions in the Chippewa Valley, Fox Valley, Madison area, Monroe area, and Southeast Wisconsin. There is also a Wisconsin SAFE KIDS Coalition, and other coalitions are in the development phase.

By supporting a strong public awareness effort coupled with car seat check ups statewide, we hope to draw attention to the alarming number of children riding in motor vehicles either unrestrained or improperly restrained. More importantly, we hope to provide families with the information and assistance they need to ensure that their children are protected during every ride. Representative Jeff Stone (R-Greenfield), chairman of the new Assembly Highway Safety Committee, notes that "although simpler installation systems for car seats are on the way, parents can't afford to wait until then to ensure their child's safety."

SAFE KIDS helps train certified child passenger safety technicians. The four-day NHTSA course is offered at various locations throughout the state (see sidebar on page 11). Less intense in-services are also available.

Contact Nan Peterson, Madison Area SAFE KIDS Coalition, (608) 262-9993, [nmpeters@facstaff.wisc.edu](mailto:nmpeters@facstaff.wisc.edu), or Jim Savage, Wisconsin SAFE KIDS, (715) 344-7101, [jim@cipsafe.org](mailto:jim@cipsafe.org).



*Madison Area SAFE KIDS and the Madison Fire Department conduct a safety seat check up. Of 67 car seats checked, corrections were made on 65. Fire department staff volunteered with traffic control and assisting the checking team.*



*Members of the Madison Police Department's new Traffic Enforcement Safety Team recently participated in a half day training on child safety seat installation and use.*



*Car seat inspection in Wisconsin Rapids*

### Safety Seat Check Ups

Information for some of these check ups is still incomplete; for further details contact Jim Savage, Wisconsin SAFE KIDS, (715) 344-7101, [jim@cipsafe.org](mailto:jim@cipsafe.org). Also contact Jim to find out how to arrange a check up in your community.

**October 9**  
Eau Claire

**October 19**  
Madison

## Air bag safety

Air bags, combined with lap/shoulder safety belts, offer the most effective protection available today for motor vehicle passengers. As of 1997, about 63 million air-bag-equipped passenger vehicles were on the road, including 33 million with dual air bags. From 1987 to 1997 about 2,600 lives were saved by air bags.

Unfortunately there have also been some fatalities involving air bag deployment. Most of these deaths could have been prevented if the occupants had been wearing a safety belt and if children age 12 and under had been properly restrained in the back seat by a child safety seat, booster seat, or seat belt.

A comprehensive strategy has been developed to preserve the benefits of air bags while minimizing the risks. Starting in 1998, the federal government has allowed certain car owners to purchase an on-off switch for their air bags. The switches are installed by auto dealers and service outlets.

Only people who fit into the following categories are eligible:

- Those who cannot avoid placing rear-facing infant seats in the front seat.
- Those who cannot adjust their driving position to keep back at least 10 inches from the steering wheel.
- Those who cannot avoid situations, such as car pools, that require a child age 12 or under to ride in the front seat.
- Those who have a medical condition that places them at some specific risk.

Many safety experts think that most people would be better off if they left their air bags alone. Experience shows that several easy steps will minimize risk:

- Keep your safety belt properly buckled. All but a very few of those killed by air bags were either unbuckled or improperly belted.
- Never place a rear-facing child safety seat in the front seat.
- Keep at least 10 inches between your breastbone and the air bag cover in the steering wheel or passenger-side dashboard.
- Children age 12 and under should always ride properly restrained in the back seat.

Soon a new generation of air bags will become available which use the latest technology to calibrate air bag deployment.

For more information visit the NHTSA website at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov), or call their *Auto Safety Hotline*, (800) 424-9393. You can pick up a brochure at your auto dealer, local motor vehicle bureau, or contact the WisDOT Bureau of Transportation Safety (608) 267-7520.

**AIR BAG SAFETY:  
BUCKLE EVERYONE!  
CHILDREN IN BACK!**

## Children and air bags don't mix

From 1990 to March 1999, 73 children died from air bag-related injuries according to NHTSA crash investigations.

Sixteen were infants. Infants should NEVER ride in the front seat of a vehicle equipped with a passenger air bag. Virtually all of the other 57 children were totally unrestrained or improperly restrained.

There are a third fewer fatalities to children who ride in the back seat whether the vehicle has an air bag or not. The best way to protect children (age 12 and under) from the risk that air bags pose—as well as from other crash-related injuries—is to be sure they are properly restrained in the back seat.

*From the Air Bag Safety Campaign, National Safety Council. Call the InfoLine, (202) 625-2570, or visit their website at [www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org).*

### PASSENGER SAFETY



#### Child Passenger Safety Week

Each year in February this nationwide effort informs parents of the need to properly restrain their children in motor vehicles. Information is provided on where to find resources on all kinds of child passenger safety issues, and law enforcement officers are encouraged to enforce safety seat laws.

#### Operation ABC: America Buckles Up Children

A nationwide effort during the last week of May and November each year urges motorists to buckle up. Law enforcement officers are encouraged to enforce child safety seat and safety belt laws. Contact the Air Bag & Seat Belt Safety Campaign, National Safety Council, (202) 625-2570, and on the web at [www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org). Organizational Action Kit and Law Enforcement Action Kit are available.

## Standardized child passenger safety and technician training

The SAFE KIDS Buckle Up program is a partnership between the National SAFE KIDS Campaign and General Motors. It was developed to train staff at GM dealerships and community injury prevention practitioners so they can educate families about the proper use of child safety seats and seat belts.

As part of the SAFE KIDS Buckle Up program, SAFE KIDS coalitions in Wisconsin are offering four-day trainings to child passenger safety (CPS) advocates and practitioners (see sidebar).



### Goal

To train CPS professionals to:

- Develop CPS technical skills
- Identify and correct misuse of child restraints
- Serve as a community resource
- Educate others in CPS
- Reduce potential liability

Participants who successfully complete the course become eligible technician candidates for the NHTSA CPS curriculum certification.

### Objectives

Certified CPS Technicians will be able to:

- Supervise, conduct or participate in CPS programs requiring technical skills (e.g., child safety seat check ups)
- Serve as a community resource
- Keep up-to-date in the field of CPS

*Elaine Kizewski, with the Center for Injury Prevention (see Resources) and a certified CPS instructor, works with a student to adjust harness straps during CPS technician training.*

### CHILD PASSENGER SAFETY AND TECHNICIAN

## Training

**October 14-15 & 18-19**  
Madison

**October 27-30**  
Tomahawk

Free for Wisconsin residents. Class size is limited so please register ASAP. For information on these and future classes, call Jim Savage, Wisconsin SAFE KIDS, (715) 344-7101

[jim@cipsafe.org](mailto:jim@cipsafe.org).



### Traffic Occupant Protection Strategies (TOPS)

An 8 hour course which provides law enforcement officers with information on such subjects as crash dynamics, air bags and dealing with the media. TOPS is offered to training officers who can go on to train other officers in their departments. Developed by NHTSA, this training is currently being modified by WisDOT Bureau of Transportation Safety. After pilot testing this fall it will be given regionally throughout Wisconsin. This is an update of the OPU training. For further information contact Don Hagen, WisDOT, (608) 267-7520, [don.hagen@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:don.hagen@dot.state.wi.us).

### Child Passenger Trauma Prevention

A training program for fire and rescue personnel designed to encourage fire/rescue stations to become a community-based information and service center for life safety education and prevention issues.

*From the US Fire Administration, NHTSA, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.*

*For details, check the web at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/ems/BuckleUp/partici/partic.html](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/ems/BuckleUp/partici/partic.html).*

OCCUPANT  
PROTECTION

## Resources



*Don Hagen, WisDOT:  
car seat checkup in  
Stevens Point*

**WisDOT, Bureau of Transportation Safety**

Don Hagen, Program Manager for Occupant Protection  
P.O. Box 7936  
Madison, WI 53707  
(608) 267-7520.  
[don.hagen@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:don.hagen@dot.state.wi.us).

See article on page 1.

*Convincer* device; available for public events to dramatize need for safety belt use. A person gets buckled into a seat which then slides down a ramp and stops abruptly. Contact the Wisconsin State Patrol, District 2, (414) 785-4700, or Chad Reuter, (608) 266-2969.

*Rollover Convincer*; a truck cab with dummy rolls over 360 degrees with and without safety belt. Contact Chad Reuter, (608) 266-2969.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) *Auto Safety Hotline*, (800) 424-9393, or (888) 327-4236 (also toll free); for example, you can order free copies of the brochures *Are You Using It Right?*, and *Child Transportation Safety Tips*. Visit their website at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov), which includes a wide variety of fact sheets and even a theater section especially for kids ([www.nhtsa.gov/kids/theater](http://www.nhtsa.gov/kids/theater)).

Center for Injury Prevention, a nonprofit organization which helps local communities protect children by conducting injury prevention programs. They also provide educational materials, safety materials at discounted prices, and the latest news on injury prevention. Contact Elaine Kizewski, (800) 344-7580.

International Association of Chiefs of Police—Operation Kids, (800) 843-4227.

National SAFE KIDS Campaign website, [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org), includes information on SAFE KIDS BUCKLE UP: e.g., child car seat locator, and car seat check up events. Call (800) 441-1888 for free materials.

*Parents* magazine (April 1999); an extensive article about child safety seat misuse.

*Precious Cargo; Protecting the Children Who Ride with You* (second edition, 1999). A 32-page booklet published by General Motors Corporation with detailed photos and explanations of all kinds of child passenger safety equipment and its proper use (see excerpt on pages 2, 5, and 6). For free copies call (800) 247-9168.

*Reader's Digest* (March 1999); "Kids at Risk; the Alarming Truth About Safety Seats"

*Safe Ride News* is a national publication covering child passenger safety. Besides providing technical information, each issue contains a reproducible Fact Sheet which subscribers can distribute free. A new manual on the proper installation of tethers is also available (see notice on page 5). Contact Safe Ride News Publications, (206) 364-5696, [info@twbc.com](mailto:info@twbc.com).

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A.; call (800) 745-SAFE for a free safety seat evaluation.

WINS (Wisconsin Information Network for Safety) is a statewide resource for child passenger safety and child safety seat questions. Information available on loaner seat programs, and costumes of Buckle Bear, Click-it the Cricket, and Vince and Larry (the crash test dummies) are available for free loan. Safety belt incentive items are available at cost. Information on seat belt extenders and chafe guards for overweight and frail elderly people. (800) 261-WINS (9467).

Wisconsin SAFE KIDS can put you in touch with a local SAFE KIDS Coalition, and they provide a wealth of child passenger safety resources; for example, *Frequently Asked Child Passenger Safety Questions*, and the *Buckle Up Hotline*, (888) 344-7580. Contact Jim Savage, (715) 344-7101, [jim@cipsafe.org](mailto:jim@cipsafe.org).

**Wisconsin Department of Transportation**

Bureau of Transportation Safety

P.O. Box 7936

Madison, WI 53707

